

## **Black Veterans for Social Justice, Inc.**

665 Willoughby Avenue, Brooklyn New York 11206-6903

**Phone: 718 - 852-6004 Fax: 718 - 852-4805 E-Mail: [BVSJ@bvsj.org](mailto:BVSJ@bvsj.org)**

9/27/22

Dear Committee Representatives,

Black Veterans for Social Justice (BVSJ) is honored to make this presentation to you as a first round awardee of the VA's Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant for Veterans. I would like to introduce myself, our organization, and provide a brief outline of expected services. My name is Wendy McClinton the President and CEO of Black Veterans for Social Justice. I have operated BVSJ for twelve years and have been with the organization for 28 years. I am honorably discharged from the United States Army; a PTSD and MST service-connected veteran, and the mother of three children who was homeless shortly after leaving the military so I know of what I speak. Thankfully, due to the founder of BVSJ Job Mashariki I was offered an opportunity by his fledgling organization to create opportunities for veterans and have been with BVSJ ever since. It has been a challenge and honor to serve my country and those who protect its freedoms when they return home.

We believe BVSJ is an excellent choice due to our commitment to veterans and our many years serving those mired in the many forms of poverty and mental illness. But what we do best is listen with a tender listening ear. That is critical because we understand veterans' backgrounds and the lives and communities they return to live. As peer mediators, we can see how they feel and hear their problems. In response, we can guide them to services they need to resolve their current issues that mitigate trauma while creating a service plan that moves them towards independent living. This typically includes housing, employment, food, and respite. There will be an ongoing sense of community via a regular meeting of BVSJ's Veteran Advisory Group.

The BVSJ program will cover the New York City metropolitan area. We expect to be in discussion with the VA on how to best implement our grant so as not to duplicate services, but in the main we expect to talk to about 1000 per year via a hotline and outreach, and expect to provide case management for about 220 utilizing case management plan and referral services. For the most difficult cases, where a referral is not enough, we will enlist the assistance of the VA and our community partner The Family Center. We expect them to conduct substance use, mental health, and co-occurring disorder counseling in tandem with community and veteran support we development in the community. In all cases, veterans will have Suicide and Safety Prevention Plans to guide their recovery and as a resource when they are navigating life by themselves. We hope to capture even more immediate care tools via a phone application.

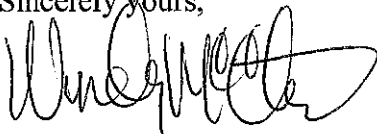
There will be four goals:

1. Get up to 800 calls per year from hotline and public information campaigns.
2. Participate in two public outreach events per week to elicit support and get at least two program referrals per week.
3. Enroll 220 veterans in suicide prevention case management. Make referrals to the VA or The Family Center for behavioral health, substance use disorders, and co-occurring conditions.
4. Help 40% of enrollees improve their functioning and suicidal risk levels as indicated by several professional analytical tools and lifestyle improvements.

All of this work will be led by a Master's level trained and experienced Director, a Senior Case Manager, a clinical team with a professional mental health agency currently working with the VA via a SAMHSA grant, five Case Managers, a Housing and Employment Specialist, and an Accountant. Please understand that most veterans we will help will not commit suicide, and there will be many false positives. But the work we do every day is part of the VA's public health solution so that more isolated veterans can come into the light utilizing the services we have operated for over forty years. We know that we cannot solve this problem alone, and we appreciate the opportunity your committee, the VA, our community partners, and veteran colleagues have provided us to make this happen.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wendy McClinton', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Wendy McClinton